

Connecting Light



Frank B. Ford

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to my sons

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Young Italian Girl Resting On Her Elbow--Cezanne

Such indolence
becomes the light
encounter-

ing her
and him
and us.

What is the art of years
but connecting
light?

Running to Light

the river and the snow
are taken by their shadows

becoming darkness
with a sound

searching light:
finding the moon
it thrashes it to ribbons.

Rewound at an eddy then
revolving whole and
cold.

Clothesline Visitation

She releases
sheets to wind.

They snap
brilliances

rowing the swollen green-
blue earth to sudden Him,
a nave

radiating blacks a-
gainst hot, belly-
ing waves.

Trio

What has fallen?
Most obviously along
the wet floor
of the woods, trees,
but of what human sense,

spirit?
In our walk,
words dessicating
mid-syllable

what once was labeled
a far-away look,

a man and a woman,
something

is being done
with a tree.

Linking the Miracles

light sung
round the chalice
and round

the priest thrusting up
the host, sunbright
her face

exploding
the front row.

At The Elevation

of the Host St Mary's
paint smell mixed
with cloying

cold cream + HEAT
pipes HAMMERED

you out of drifted sleep CLAMMY

and there IT is BAD BOY and
growing

on 12! oh my GOD
and what NOW?

Two Met

Each turns
the glow
to knife

between *o*
bold us dark

cupped, sun-
set-rimmed.

Spin us free
when we have drunk

this shimmering
between.

Where

the curve flows
to become

everywhere

people walk
in fields
amid the flaring

stones and trees,
the grasses
described by birds,

and each is what
touches.

The Plan

We go our separate ways
to separate our ways
to go our ways separate
to separate our going
to ways of separate
ways of going separate
we go our separate ways
of going separate
to our separate ways
of separate going
to our ways separate
we go
we separate
we go separate
to separate to go our separate ways.

Civilization

The Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton.

-Wellington

On the playing fields of Eton
I assumed my fair turn in
New Haven Yale bells held us
as in a vise,

through mine fields since
missing the notices
haphazardly posted a-
mong the swells

of cricketeers and footballers,
the rise of dust in dusk, cool-edged.

There's a good chap when
you miss

your middle-class leg.

Bursted

At the library display
brown ink, browner-splotched page
in application for a pedlar's license:
"gun bursted" and he could thus
no longer farm, that one arm hanging useless.

Rushing! some farm wife and kids, she the point of V
towards the lurch and buzz and rattle of his coming
down their lane. Oh she at any rate would know

the meaning of the stoutest pot he sold and yet
this slightest fabric for a dress would float
to her the more she kept ahead of paddlers

through that brilliant dust--
their muffled, fussy cries.
Those crazed from life should sell to us.

Nighthawks, after Hopper

The world, of course, is dead.

It was my father's as this could be
Nickel Charlie's, the all-night restaurant
next to Loew's Poli in New Haven where he'd repair
after the graveyard shift on the Journal-Courier.

A linotype operator his fingers swam
beside a window propped up by Four Roses
against a smothering night. Wasn't, though, this
lead and whiskey universe he died from since

he retired punching the copy out of tape under
a livid, technical fluorescence--which is of
my world of course. And I must
sit among these waiting nighthawks to become

the one who shows a slice of face and who observes
the hard-edged guy, nondescript

in the dark suit of his time with gray fe-
dora and black band. I wear it too, sniffing
the coffee, hearing the chromium hiss
of the polished urns, watching the redhead

check her nails. Diner of the Heart.
A blondish counterwoman thrusts down his arms
like old women washing clothes
in the rivers which erode exhausted cities.
The redhead played
367 for a year and it came out
the day she stopped. I say nothing,
having myself run out

of numbers, bad luck entombed
in the wool of my suit.

But then I mumble past
the obligation of our unconcern that I'll play
it, three, six, seven staring out at nothing from the bright space
of terror. She says play a quarter for me.

Viewed as Drama

the war's a
disappointment

thus said D. W. Griffith,
FILMMAKER.

Anthony Sangrossa,
BUTCHER, rocks

his cleaver, its
discs of dreamy light.

Way It's

after shooting the redundant
general and staring in the mirror how
old I look

To Tamzen On Her Fortieth Birthday

Undoubtedly you'll get this crap from others:
Life begins @ 40 etc. . .you're not getting older you're
getting better--yeah all the Hallmark cliches showering down
to spice the big day up.

Right! Uh huh. (I hear
your edged voice) The heart at any rate

is not as clever as the cards; it knows itself
moment by moment
in love and in hate

and in loneliness, despair, and joy. . .
so often also in that ravaging war within itself.

Your blood plunges on to its own beat,
mocking time to let you taste a memory
more real than now, the memory of a child.

And I alone among your friends can speak to you, that little girl,
about your Father's world, for I have breathed
the air of those same places, like Kimpo Air Base
where he must have touched down at the least,

and where I stood in rain that iced the brilliant
spotlights to hear a shivering, incomprehensible Scot read
my name from a list containing many who would die.

And I am twenty and could be dead soon and am
totally unafraid. I have money for women and booze
and yet, too, I want to get to Tokyo to stay alone in a hotel
that Frank Lloyd Wright designed, earthquake-proof,

floating on a sea of mud--and just to say I stayed there.
I love that wild and shy and scholarly young man
both for his sins and his sweet intents.
And I embrace him as you must embrace yourself today.

I am twenty then, half your years, and if
in the midst of a magic space we meet,
both at that age, and touch fingertips
to fingertips and stare

into each other's eyes, perhaps that selfsame magic
can extract some pain from the ensuing years

and even bring your Daddy back to you
borne up by love on some pure sea of vision.

I know. I know. Images crazy and fanciful. Get real,
Frank! @ I invent your voice again. It stops me, for
what it really says is never give your heart away.
But it changes nothing. Our voices change nothing.

What sustains us is our power to love and nothing else.
Only that will take that grudge you cannot purge
from out your heart, those wry
distrusts.

Then will you float
lovely as you are
upon your life,
but not before.
When you are still
and know.

Stream

our part
in stopping
forever
fails, I place
the boat mid-

spring past
a wave
of light

blossoms
by your glistening

wrist always
desire

trails it back, the mind
listening,
listening

The Matter With Us

It is cold
we have made
once more

narrowing
the blaze to this
still point

to turn and
to ponder
dispassionately

concentrating
grains of fire-sung ice

keen as the
much folded tip
of a Japanese sword.

From dark the floating

voice where I had gone
to feel more

alone, thinking
I was, and then our
sergeant's words,
the straining

wind off ropes outside
the tent. "You okay now?"

*Yeah they said little
flu. Pills they give me.*

"Others. Gone." *I know.*
"No. Hit mine. Got word. Radio."

Shoving us boys up onto the throbbing truck,
renewing all the giggling by hauling me
back off then for the medics--"His war be-
gins tomorrow!" But on they jeered
and hooted and are still

lurching away from the sun,
faces like singing
grapefruit.

The German Lesson

The women in one camp fucked
the guards for toilet
paper.

(To what base uses do we all etc.?)

To see us
mincing proudly
now so coy and
FAT.

Human Potential

We want the language
as a friend

who'll tell a gentle joke
We'll always go out for coffee forgetting
to eye the gauges:

The leaders must hold this engraved.
Well, our own friend's actual head
is gone. Anybody can't hear
jokes is quite exact.

Kamikazie

means divine wind.

On trains the young men
carried a ball of rice in
leaves, they

headlong, reverent, would
have the shit blown out of them, war

being this sort of capital concern as now
a drink by the same name
by the same name.

Prayer To My Daughter

What I'd like to have for you is a good liar only
he can tell the truth with conviction since evidently
he knows what it is as contrasted to his obvious duplicity
refusing to lie to himself. So therefore
when you have him you really got something true and more
solid than an alleged good man like your father who unfortunately
doesn't have a daughter.

The Peach Boy

I bring my GI Orient and Paul, 4,
his dubbed cartoon of Saturday morn-
ing monsters in outer space yet
he hasn't much to lose as I
 exclude Sigmund's and Carl's
inner-space hardware store cause

 the play opens with the father
discovering this great peach in a stream,
 and once home the old couple uncover
a baby inside as samisens bridge my life

 in sound back to a small dim room of a
Tokyo club where a guy picks a tune from this white
 baby grand and I'm in raw company

 alone then, with my girl better and worse
I'm tearing at a steak and throwing back Nip-
pon beer. Cocksure, but she's hushing me now,

because the guy composes, the pale
lid floating inclined on his smoky progressions
 in my sliding mind

the Peach Boy has grown
up, is prowling the audience when from his
silk, peach light widens over little Paul

beautifully glow meets glow. Where's the
dragon? he asks just so we're all peach
 children, grand babies born to save
 the world, rope the ogres round.

Now the Peach Boy's finally up to that onstage.
 The witch knifing in she's run through
 for her trouble. It has to be to move us to

a place
 where a far dark house and tree
 press moon and clouds between.
 Water spreads to us from there.
 In the muted air and soft-lit spill
 are all of my selves still
 with Paul's. We name all we see
 and think eternally,
a lake.

Black Frost

 The kiss among diving
trees as from the jack-o-lantern
 house the dread-

 ful speeches of our other out-
 wreathing in a cone.

Shadows harrowing the stones,
 we dream ourselves in breath.

Against the Deck

she was thin in ways
ay she was as thin
in places

aces were wider,
snide reluctant queens and fat
jacks held their spots;

lots of pain
rained on hands
and has.

Living Nonsense

Who can treat the meaning-
lessness? No doctor or priest
telling you you're not

the first, thrusting whatever text
through emptiness of air, that
air where you are indeed
first: Alpha in the hollows

whistling your name. It's
important not to think
because you never know

what might start
you out from the white scarves.

As like the weather, it's, than
any idea, something

like a wave comes in
time or doesn't.

Mineral Baths -- Bursa, Turkey

Steam lifts
to the rotunda, its
art of running arabesques
around windows thick and old,
aswarm with aurioles.

Down here the men soon draw
apart, spurning visionary air
for modesty. The wives
within their separate rooms

play fast and loose
with luminosity,

stream in flesh
inseparable
from light.

Paradise may be a place
 we never know

 where things leave off.
 I know a mo-
 ment swims in

 sight, those misted baths in Bursa
 where Woman flows
 as light.

Sung To the Tune of Anything At All

The sailor danced the whole
insinuated night,
went along home, hers,
to his dismay.

Her apparatus like his
own, though greater,
he beat to death
this epicine coquette.

Papers made a lot of it,
asking who is safe,
but at the trial he swung
the hirsute jury by detail.

A college town
thus used to
universals,
it rankled
to a man, both black and blond:

First to be deceived,
and then outdone.

Using Air

of a buttered morning a coed
in legwarmers bound
for Poly Sci and yet

they signal rasping
practice boards be-
neath an icy glow, ad-

junct not to art
but pain

splayed out
after a rag
doll flop.

The newest anything jives
sweaty trial and its
impure collapse.

A stylish hat
is softly cool
in form-

ing light. The old heart
heaves to
burn-
ing work.

Reply

You said I was pretty that evening
of a thousand birds, their wings
beat darkly up from your soft mouth,
sweeping the moon

away. The few who come here now drop
at odds. Querulous. Chatter.
Old old old!

So your sighing friend has journeyed
from your new village asking me
to write you after. . .too long.

The moon, just having risen, trembling-
edged upon the water
in his cedar cup. She
is dead then?

Those who have died are as a swarm of
hands beckoning an older moon
this long white evening to
drown our shadows.

Departure At Twilight

Soft airs raise the women,
each face a swinging
blaze, their earrings swaying

glimmers into cars
suspended in a cold liquidity.
Sinking to a knee, a gold

surrounded man, struck through
this first time to
his heart of hearts.

At Sounion

of a morning woven over stone
I bump camera then smock.
We share a mist

wherein I must refuse, no
dreamy photographs desired: my-
self and nothing. Stavros, he

of ghostly smock, is ticked at me.
It rises as a litany
to an imagined sun.

I jab along the slippery rocks
for cooler idioms,
finally to divine

lovers (Byron's one)
who have scratched their hearts to ruins.

Spooners weave through our academies
shunning all the moves to set

their dreaming steps to music
more appropriate.

Or so I later feel with ouzo
at the shivering cafe
before sun fairly rockets through

and temple can assert in flame,
informing wave on wave of rain
the wisdom of arrangement past
this opalescent glass.

Three Shortstops

Feat

you've gotten the intellectual shove:
reasons for everything and no love.

Corona River

You a-
nother.

Centuries:
which?

The Necessity of Sleaze in Language

I looked up her dress

in the Sears' catalog

Scoring

Tuck drove at the basket as the rocket curved,
released the ball to find its softest high be-
neath the swinging bulbs. We never saw it drop
at hands thrust up. They dug out the both of us
from the others & we fuzzed through hospitals.
A year ripped off, we met again, something like
blood with anyone not blown away. His last trip
here was made on snow so back we go at frozen
tracks, & beg of a sunken doctor
once more to mark him down enough
in his fast-darkening room, where
ice is eating out all the windows
he must ritually punch towards me
"Keep at the books; just don't..."
Turn away from his cracking looks
& "Why?" I ask then, why anything?
No answer for his face falls off.

From The Fishing Pier (Nam Decade)

Far out the surfers start their ride.
The day is gloss and wind and wide
And I have come to get a rest
From *Time* and Kodachromes of death.

The wind makes dervishes of sand
And bathers shroud their shiny tans,
The surfers now are coming fast,
Upright, tight, then slickly past.

The clouds would seem to shred the sun,
The sea threads white and slides down spun,
The last wave peaks and surfers sag
While plunging into rubber bags.

Generation

Joe and Madeline
graduated Cornell & went on
to Ph (got married) Ds @ NYU.

gestured intensively
as they rapped a concept
till it, surrounded,
surrendered.

Somehow though it galled
their living for thought
the rent was scrounged up
& the bread got bought,
bed often enough made & unmade etc.

Two kids
bridged their discussions
like afterthoughts.

They tuned out
Joe and Madeline's
mouth.

The Terrorist

I
wait as
have others.

You
strike
at your wish

or may not
I know

your demands
and have al-
ways.

The Plain Answer

The logic of a dream is
in it, you learn
but needn't then.

The walking life
cannot play fair
with its burden of desire.

So how find the dream of a day?

Enter the rose,
ask how it knows.

At the University

Strutting memorial stones
a pigeon fantails between
boy scholars untrue

to anything
might take looking into,

girls aswing with a something
nothing can propound, bi-
cyclists boring under

the latest shit
on man falling
out the window.

Farce Averted

Will she live with her
little panties here?
Walk around in her underwear?

I'm not so mature that the shadow
of her snatch

won't make a fearful difference thus
with all dark images it must

be left at that:
No Chance.

Those Two Again

Snow is
crystalgeometrics
fused to hood
a knobby world.

In art
things turned are fired to glaze,
perfect, caught
there right before

a crazed
drunk wrecks the shop, must be
dealt with, giv-
en booze and meat

to keep
his unkempt soul till snow
confides once
more outside the

window,
sticks around to smooth hung-
over light.

Calling It A Day

The Surrender to the Fools was effected
with minimum pomp--to their sheerest
miff for they had arrived
in fool regalia: gowns and suits
and hoods and badges, bright
chains of office. Instead

their capitulators gave wry,
exhausted speeches. . .out of order, off in pace
but the snapped-back fools smiled grandly through

them all, surrounding each
whistling irony and wish-
ing everybody all the best
elsewhere, knowing there's no such place.

Home

Where I come from we
never really lived
(so we said and did)

and here I'm stranger
still for some
place won't answer.

There's pleasure
on paths that birds blur
ahead. They're

joining us
to song.

Coastal Graveyard in Branford, Connecticut

The frugal spaces
as if Yankees embraced
the dirt down un-
to them. Above,

salt-scoured markers rippling in
exhaust from DATSUN & McDONALDS.
(We must seem to ripple too
inside the supermarket's window.)

A stone shakes
at the end of vision.

OFF THE COAST OF BRAZIL
we had earlier browsed.
The girl scans barcodes
off our frozen food.

*Where water is the jungle,
bronze and green, shrieking
birds of teal-streaked apricot
throng massive heat, drop hushed in
ribbons past the dripping palms.*

*Through swollen calm,
thence shadowing a dusk-
smoked wave which slides,
an amorist's shoulder.*

4th of July

Ketchup Corvette cradling this winking blonde
bangs at the light with my shuddering Dart hey
big wink for real? mid shimmers of SUN-
OCO & EXXON & GULF & WESTERN CLOTHING SOLD
HERE

PIZZA KING BEER BURGER BOY WENDYS the para-
bolic piss of those Golden Arches & ARBYS fries
onions busting through these coarse grains my A-
merican Blonde shouldering diesels hiss in
stinks of asphalt oil & grease glossy ex-
plosions of a thousand cars in shiny black
parking lots puddling suns O my America & O my
new girl quick inside your own raw wave
hey America I'm your native son hanging in
there hard in army pants neon-nylon
jacket rocking my self-destructing motor in a
ROUTE 1 ECSTASY

she's off @ spectral green
stands on the brakes then lays down
rubber fishtailing into BUSTERS
WATER HOLE her hair snaps acetylene.

Beer and Sandwich On The Road

I'M THE GREATEST POLACK EVER INVENTED WHAT'RE
YOU?
American. HUH! YOU AINT NO FUCKIN IND-IAN!
Then Irish extraction I'll have to say. YOU'LL HAVE TO SAY
SHIT! DON'T USE NO 50-CENT WORDS ON ME!
IRISH: SHIT IN BED AND KICK IT OUT SO
DON'T GIVE ME NO POLACK JOKES NEITHER I HEARD EM
ALL
AND I DON'T TAKE EM SERIOUS--NOT STUPID ENOUGH.

Overheard

I aint no
CHURCH person
you know
what I MEAN?

All that STUFF! I gotta
get OUTA
there. But everybody
should go.

Language and the Marketplace

If the particular whore
enjoys an icecream cone
why blame her? O

see can you say
she should rather essay
honest work for her coin, but's
lacking the mere what?
Push? Guts?

Not the latter certainly: Beings courageous
omit the metaphor
we fearfuls live with
and are, therefore.

There'll Always Be Us

Eat beans AMERICA needs the gas,
and in the event of nuclear attack,
put your head between your legs
and kiss your ass

goodbye. The people'll save us, yes
after all the politicians' twirling
lies, their suck-
ing dry the public tit, it's

the love of the people
makes light of the world.

The Chance

FEW TIMES I CAN AFFORD DELTA I WATCH
PARTS OF MY FATHER'S DYING IN HOLLYWOOD
FLORIDA CAUSE BIG C GOT HIM OH YEAH
NO APPEAL & HE ASKS ME TO FIX UP THE DART
GET IT INSPECTED YOU KNOW SO HE CAN DRIVE
WHEN HE KNEW HE NEVER WOULD & THEN
THE MECHANIC TELLING ME THE ONE EDGEY
THING. WASN'T SURE BRAKES'D PASS.

*YOU DRIVE AROUND IN THERE & THEY TEST THINGS
TELL YOU SOMETHING TO DO & THEY READ A DIAL
BUT STAY AWAKE & WHEN THEY SAY BRAKES
REALLY HIT EM! SOMETIMES IF YOU...*

& I'M STANDING OUT IN BACK THERE WHILE
HE AIMS THE HEADLIGHTS
AT A CHART INSIDE & I'M WATCHING
HIS BODY MAN HAMMER SUN

INTO BLOTCHES OF OIL IT LOOKED
A WHOLE AWFUL JUMBLE
OF DUSTY WEEDS & JUNK

PARTS SHAKING ON THE HEAT
& THERE'S NO WAY
& NEVER COULD BE ANY
WAY TO TELL YOU GREG HOW GLORIOUSLY
I STOMPED ON THE FUCKERS!

Dentist

He explains decay in morning light,
I phrase colors of the corrugated shed
three stories down,

changing the language
as light changes and when

it stops, the words must
continue in order

to save us. We say too much and yet
at a still point are graced.

He says his speech again--no use
to talk to me. But then I listen
since we are all of us forgiven.

The Territory

A current phrase or two
having to do with finding
oneself. What
acquire?

What own?
The danger
of both.

Sly

the shy experience daily pain
those moments so benign to others
are really Being
forced to Crisis

and even knowing that this too shall pass
they do eventually wear thin,
then breathe a bit
before they breathe their last

Amen

Defining Hope

Let your veins drink where
other veins were let.

Kneel on stones from whence
blood was almost scoured.

(All acts following this
as useless.)

Nearby, a petal down
a stream. . . petals,

showering

onto a stream, a
stream of petals.

Ay

There is and is not
a rub. It has acquired
your wearing thin.

Times you thought
you gave up.

Dreams are in themselves
arguments.

The Moment

Evening is a river
of shadows rushing
the trees un-

till you hear water
and are not sure

that it is wind
or that dark

itself can run.
Knowing that

you can't be
sure of anything
alone

then, breathe
your question.

In Our Cold Stars

An old car waits
in the terrific sun.

We turn away
a moment
to adjust

our shapeless clothes
and stand
for it, the
camera,

dreaming and haste
in our mouths.

We want no part of it now, this ferocity
of self. We have terror in our mouths.

The wind blows stinging grit.
Where is it from?
We must find out.

It is not history,
It is not photographs.

The Hand In The Future

We are composing ourselves
as the photographer composes.

Our being
guided and
guiding him

and each solely directing such
limited chaos making us
free in a way
of the result.

For one certainly can't hand it
to the photographer. The moment
shown over and over must not be

an accident or the prejudice of
one eye and one waving arm.

But to say
it is us we
were vital-
ly promising

everyone.

Directing The Scene

This night river breaks the grasses.
I touch air enough to hear
children in the fragrances,

in the river-wind
woods holding seige,
their voices fire against the trees.

The children become a music.
The river is a darker music.

I thrust my hand in it
it bends

everything together.

The Grove

Those leaning pines with sparse and floating branches,
the sea behind thinned here and there by light:
A Japanese print before I'd seen one.

Does the scene exist before the artist makes it so?
He makes another and he makes it too.
As I do once again listening to music.

I don't think such nonsense at 20 at that sea-brushed
Imperial Navy Hotel as then the giggling maids clean up
after Americans. I know they giggle more at us
than they ever did at them, the cultural differences--
the way we laugh at signs like NOT TO BE SAFETY OF SWIMM.

I can't put Galway out of that young place
woven like the fragrances off sand and pine
through notes running from my record here, his
flute clean-cut along the trees and sea and funny signs.

Weaving in and out of time.
Folk melodies from turn-of-century Japan he plays
and I sense that scattered grove a century before
hotels and such, a farmer hums a tune from his own life
and that is history.

The wind in from the sea is not benign.

But one day it is again and the painter
sets his easel up. He has had his coffee
and needs nothing
more today than the trying to make art
the way and not the way the wind is music
the way and not the way the light informs.

Whatever we find out there is there for us and despite us
and despite the heartbreak years.

Tell the composer at Auschwitz, the dancer at Hiroshima,
all your fine ideas.

Visions Of The Yale Library

where a sari insinuates
scholars, in hunches, eyes
above blond glasses

diving then to proof
as she is by
and by

the checker, dour enthroned:
both subsumed
as the doorway widens to
mercury noon.

At lunch she'll laugh away
a junior's suave ennui
at George and Harry's,

nod on cue,
wring teabag a-
gainst spoon.

His Despair slouching towards
Elegance she
stares past. . .outside
bright cars contend. . .

and past that old penultimately
randy inference,
thence right to breathing tea

wherein a somebody
unfocusses his gravest
evidence in time

to glimpse along
a scintillant, inner eye
a spiritual dress.



Frank B. Ford is a poet, playwright, and fiction writer residing in Philadelphia, PA.

His poems and stories have appeared in various magazines, and his plays have been performed at, among others, Guthrie 2 in Minneapolis, and New York Stageworks.



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